

Duxbury looks at 'co-located' school plan

School building
options range from
renovation
to new construction

DUXBURY - Last week, the Massachusetts School Building Authority board voted to move Duxbury Middle School to "Feasibility Study" and noted that given the age of the high school, both schools would be studied. According to a statement from School Building Committee Chairman Elizabeth Lewis, the committee will meet with the MSBA in the near future to discuss the work completed by the town to date and supplemental work required for the feasibility study.

At this phase, the MSBA requires the town to retain the services of an owner's project manager (OPM) certified by the Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official program. There are funds remaining in the 2009 Town Meeting appropriation of \$200,000 for the feasibility study. If the remaining funds combined with the reimbursement provided by the MSBA are adequate to supplement the existing study and OPM fees, no additional funding will be needed at this time. At the conclusion of this phase, a preferred option will be identified and at that time funding for the design and construction will be requested.

Since Town Meeting in March, the School Building Committee has worked with Dore and Whittier Architects to finalize the feasibility study. The study presented six options for the schools, including renovation of each school, replacement of each school, partial addition and renovation, and a co-located high school and middle school. A co-located school would join both schools in one building with separate entrances, educational areas, cafeterias, etc., with a central core that may house shared facilities such as kitchen, media center and administrative areas.

Cost estimates for each option were developed and compared with the projected costs for necessary maintenance

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over the next 20 years. A copy of the study is available for viewing at the Duxbury Free Library and the superintendent's office. (The Reporter will review those cost options in its next edition.)

In June, Rep. Tom Calkins, D-Kingston, arranged for a meeting with the School Building Committee and MSBA Executive Director Katherine Craven. The committee briefed Craven on the work completed to date and inquired about the possibility of addressing the needs of both the middle and high schools in one project. Craven said that given the similar ages of the buildings, a co-located school would be a viable option if the town had an available building site.

She further noted that given the competitive construction market and constraints with renovation

projects, the MSBA may look more favorably on new construction. Renovation projects often do not provide the most efficient space layout due to existing building shell, have longer project durations due to phasing, create more disruption for the school community, and typically require rental of temporary modular classrooms that are not reimbursed by the MSBA. Craven informed the School Building Committee that a "senior study" would be completed of the middle and high schools by a team of architects retained by MSBA. The purpose of the senior study is to validate the Statement of Interest submitted to the MSBA last fall. This was completed in late June.

At a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee, the School Building Committee discussed all the options presented in the

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feasibility report. There was interest in the co-located school option given the numerous advantages. If a renovation project was selected, the MSBA would permit only one project at a time and it could be years before the second school project would be approved. Currently, the School Building Committee has selected the middle school as its first priority. Renovation would require phasing, modular classrooms, considerable disruption, and longer project duration; would mean a limited potential for energy savings; and given the building layout would not accommodate the team-teaching model used at the middle school.

A higher reimbursement ratio is available for a model school that incorporates green materials and building systems. It was agreed at the meeting that further study was needed to review the siting of a co-located school and potential restrictions on the parcels of land comprising the school campus. The School Building Committee has authorized Dore and Whittier Architects to develop massing plans to demonstrate how a co-located school would fit on the campus and to provide streetscape sketches to show how the building mass would look from various locations on the surrounding streets.

Two potential areas on the campus were identified for a co-located school: the area behind the middle school together with the middle school site and the area adjacent to the pool and student union. The supplemental services to develop the massing plans will be paid with funds remaining from the original appropriation for the feasibility study.

In deliberating on the School Building Committee's project last week, the MSBA board noted that the project may be well suited for a co-located school, in particular a model school. There are currently model schools available for high schools and middle schools, and the MSBA recently selected several elementary schools. If Duxbury and the MSBA agreed upon a co-located school, this would become the first model of this type. MSBA provides an additional 5 points of

reimbursement (5 percent of approved project cost) for adoption of a model school.

Aug. 31, Don Walter of Dore and Whittier Architects and Dr. Frank Locker will discuss the spatial and educational components of a co-located school with the convocation of Duxbury teachers and administrators. Locker led the three-day visioning sessions attended by approximately 50 teachers, administrators and community members last fall as part of the feasibility study.

Going forward, the School Building Committee is working with the School Committee to develop a School Building Committee Web page to provide updates to the public. All meetings are posted at Town Hall and are open to the public. The next School Building Committee meeting will take place at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 17, in Room 106 of Duxbury High School.